

Written Testimony of:

Diana G. Mennone
Woodbury

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Co-Chairs Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Diana Mennone and I am writing to express deep concerns due to the Governor's proposed budget cuts to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). These cuts are severely disproportionate for an agency whose families have been so vocal and public about their need for additional services.

As the sibling of a brother with profound intellectual and complex developmental disabilities and as a retired special education teacher, I have been involved in my brother's life as well as in the lives of many students as they have grown into adulthood and some now into their senior years. Learning academic, work and functional skills for this population especially for those individuals with multiple challenges is a long and difficult process. It requires creative teaching, many trials of practice, many hours, days, months, sometimes years to learn a new skill often with use of adaptive devices. With a team approach involving services from a variety of disciplines as well as family and caregivers, the students I have worked with as well as the educators who have worked with my brother have achieved much. Over a summer or even a week due to hospitalization, skills can be lost. It is most important for routine, consistent and frequent learning opportunities to maintain proficiency.

Employment Opportunities and Day Support

Over \$10MM in funding reductions will result in high school graduates having NO day supports and those who may transfer out of Southbury Training School and other long term care facilities. Regression in skills learned during school funded programs will occur rapidly. How sad that the years of hard work and dedication of many for their loved ones would be lost. In addition, already stressed families of young adults will further bear the hardship to provide care and support during the daytime hours when they were previously in school.

I'm sure there will be many other written and verbal testimonies with remarks concerning cuts to the Volunteer Services Program and Community Residential Services...and rightfully so. All these reductions proposed are tragic and insensitive.

Please stop the disproportionate cuts to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and restore full funding to DDS.

Thank you,
Diana Mennone, M.S.
Woodbury, CT 06798